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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: CHADIAN INSIDER CONFIRMS RIFT WITH JEM, UNITY
TALKS BETWEEN SLA/UNITY, URF

CLASSIFIED BY CDA LUCY TAMLYN FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D)

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Summary

11. (C) A rift has emerged between the Chadian Government and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), a businessman with close ties to President Deby and a prominent SLA/Unity commander, told Poloff. Verifying previous reports that SLA/Unity's leadership has ceased its infighting and coalesced around Abdullah Yehia (reftel), both the businessman and the commander were optimistic that discussions between SLA/Unity and the URF will yield to their consolidation and suggested that the international community sponsor a "conference" to finalize these efforts toward unity. While neither Abdulwahid al Nur nor Khalil Ibrahim are likely to attend such a meeting, according to both men, greater cohesion between SLA/Unity, the URF, and other factions could draw support away from Ibrahim and al Nur and weaken their ability to influence events. End summary.

Chad-JEM Rift

12. (C) A rift has emerged between the Chadian Government and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Musa Ahmet Oumar, a businessman with close ties to both the Chadian Government and the Darfur rebel movements, and Kadu, a prominent Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Unity commander, told Poloff on March 29. Chad shifted its support from JEM to the United Revolutionary Front (URF), led by former JEM Secretary General Bahar Idriss Abu Gharda. According to

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Oumar, a close associate of President Deby's brother Dausa (a frequent interlocutor with Darfur's rebel movements), President Deby was angered by JEM's public boasting of its support for the Chadian Government during the February rebel offensive on N'djamena.

13. (S) Oumar's account, however, is one of many similar reports in recent days. In a separate conversation with Poloff on March 30, SLA/Unity leader Suleiman Jamous explained that Deby ordered JEM to remain in Chad after he signed the Dakar agreement with Sudanese President Bashir. Deby intended to test whether Sudan would restrain the Chadian militias and did not want JEM activity to provide a

pretext for another Chadian rebel incursion. JEM Chairman Khalil Ibrahim ignored Deby's instructions, however. Sensitive reporting also indicates that a visiting delegation of the Sudanese Umma Party is brokering a deal between Deby and the National Congress Party (NCP), one condition of which is that Deby move to isolate JEM.

¶4. (C) Despite the cooling in Chad-JEM relations, it will be difficult for Deby to cripple Ibrahim entirely given his enduring support within the Kobe clan of the Zaghawa tribe, said Oumar. He suggested that Poloff meet with Dousa Deby to discuss how Chad and the U.S. could cooperate in mitigating Ibrahim's influence, characterizing him as an "obstruction to peace." Oumar intimated that, in spite of Ibrahim's clan ties, President Deby can foment a split within JEM that will cripple the movement. (Note: Oumar subsequently arranged this meeting with Dausa Deby, which will be reported septel. End note.) Oumar and Kadu confirmed numerous other reports, including from the United Nations in Sudan, that JEM now has more vehicles and weapons than fighters as a result of mass defections and a Sudanese military offensive in West Darfur.

Rebel Consolidation?

¶5. (SBU) Verifying previous reports that SLA/Unity's leadership has ceased its infighting and coalesced around Abdullah Yehia (reftel), Oumar and Kadu were also optimistic that discussions between SLA/Unity and the URF will yield agreement on consolidation of the two movements, including the establishment of a common negotiating team to participate in the UN/AU peace process. They underscored that no substantive policy differences existed between the two movements--in contrast to JEM, which seeks regime

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change in Khartoum rather than focusing on securing greater rights for Darfur. Once SLA/Unity and the URF have formed a negotiating team, Oumar and Kadu predicted that SLA faction leader Ahmed Abdulshafie, a Fur, would be under pressure to join as well. While Shafie's weak military and political position limits his influence, said Kadu, there is still value in consolidating as many of the SLA factions as possible ahead of negotiations with Khartoum.

Rebels Again Request Unity Meeting

¶6. (SBU) Asked what role the international community can play in support of the peace process, Oumar and Kadu suggested a "conference" to bring SLA/Unity, the URF, and any other interested factions together for discussions. They mentioned the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue's abortive attempt to organize a meeting in Mombasa, Kenya in the summer of 2007 as a model for such an event. (Note: Jamous endorsed this idea in a later meeting with Poloff, saying that a unity conference should begin with discussions among field commanders and then draw in the political leaders of the rebel factions. End note.)

¶7. (SBU) Skeptical that Ibrahim or demagogic SLA leader Abdulwahid al Nur would attend such a unity conference, Oumar and Kadu nonetheless explained that great cohesion between SLA/Unity, the URF, and other smaller factions could draw support away from Ibrahim and al Nur and weaken their ability to influence events. The people of Darfur will gravitate toward a united movement with the power to gain concessions from Khartoum on issues like security, compensation and development, they predicted. Oumar and Kadu alleged that the UN/AU mediation is not neutral, spending hours with NCP officials in Khartoum but only visiting rebel leaders on an intermittent basis--and then only for hour-long meetings. The lack of confidence in the

UN/AU mediation makes it even more necessary for the movements to present a united front in order to extract compromises from Khartoum.

18. (SBU) (Note: The senior leadership of SLA/Unity and the URF will be traveling outside Sudan for the next several weeks. Jamous is seeking medical treatment in Paris (using a passport issued by Chad). Sharif Harir returned to Norway. Yehia is in Tripoli waiting to travel to Brussels. While URF insider Tajedinne Niam and soon-to-be announced URF deputy president Khamis Abdullah are in Juba, URF head Abu Gharda is planning to leave N'djamena for Europe within one week. End note.)

Comment

19. (C) Deby has put himself in a difficult position vis-Q-vis JEM. Continued backing for the movement puts him in violation of the myriad peace agreements with Sudan, provides a pretext for continued Sudanese-backed aggression against his regime, and risks international rebuke. However, having benefited from overt JEM aid during the February attack on N'djamena, Deby's total withdrawal of political and logistical support could generate a backlash within the Zaghawa Kobe and those members of the regime with long-standing familial ties to Khalil and JEM, such as intelligence chief Ismail Chaibo, at the moment that he faces the possibility of another major rebel incursion. Given the tenuous JEM dynamic, Chad's effort to facilitate dialogue between the URF and SLA/Unity to forge a more cohesive SLA structure may be an effort to create another Sudanese rebel force willing to defend Deby's regime in the event of a new attack inspired by Khartoum. End comment.

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